

# **Leadership and Management Conference**

**University of Worcester**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

**“The appropriation of theories, ideas, concepts and models by  
management practitioners”.**

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Centre for People @ Work

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# Definitions

**Management** : ‘Leading and directing an organization’ and ‘getting things done through people’.

**Appropriation** : ‘Incorporation within a governing framework’ in a ‘stable, assured and comfortable’ way.



# Theoretical Insights

- ✓ **Diffusion of innovations**  
(Rogers)
- ✓ **Fashion Theory**  
(Abrahamson)
- ✓ **Adult Learning**  
(Kofka; Schultz; Dewey; Mezirow)



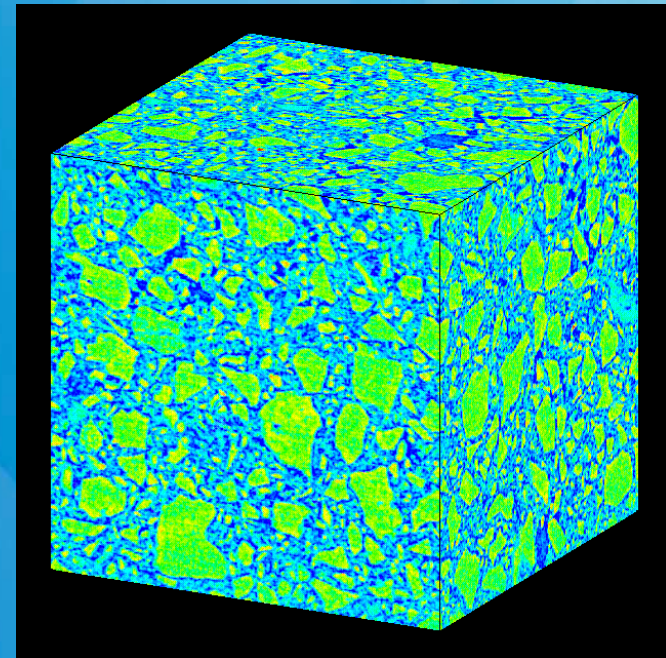
# Methodology

- ✓ **Overarching research philosophy of realism**
- ✓ **Qualitative data**
- ✓ **Inductive reasoning**
- ✓ **Case study strategy**
- ✓ **Data analysis process Eisenhardt**
- ✓ **Critical incident narrative**



# Initial Data Set

- ✓ Semi-structured, face to face & telephone, recorded interviews.
- ✓ 24 senior managers, five organisations, all economic sectors; 15 part time MBA participants.
- ✓ Verbatim transcripts, 160 critical incidents, 355,000 words, 34 hours 53 minutes in total.





# Key Findings

- × No obvious, direct, conscious usage of formal theory in decision making.
- × No classical, decision tree, decision making.
- × No predictive utilisation of formal theory.
- ✓ Retrospective confirmation of pre-existing practices.



# Key Findings

✓ **Strong evidence of recognition based decision – taking.**

**Described as experience, instinct, experiential, common sense, subconscious, intuitive, informal, reactive, immediate and practical etc.**



# Key Findings

✓ **Strong evidence of emergent decision – building.**

**Described as gradual, evolving, discovering, emergent and considered etc.**

**Using both self sufficient and collaborative processes.**





# Key Findings

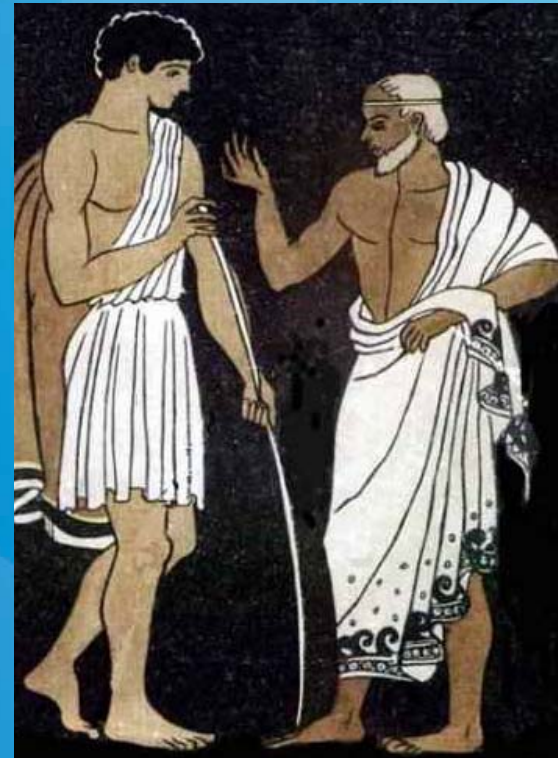
✓ Self sufficient processes included :

(i) unstructured, slightly chaotic personal reflection;  
(ii) deconstruction and reconstruction (iii) strong personal values (iv) a willingness to utilise trial and error (v) a willingness to take incremental steps.



# Key Findings

- ✓ **Collaboration involved :**
  - (i) peers, subordinates, bosses, former colleagues, established mentors, and role models;**
  - (ii) organisationally appointed facilitators and as a last resort**
  - (iii) paid consultants with a proven track record as a recent practitioner.**



# Key Findings

✓ The exceptions were :  
(i) where barriers prevented collaboration; (ii) the coincidental attendance at an event (iii) metaphorical usage to describe the future and (iv) those whose role was to facilitate changes in managerial approach.



# The Guru's

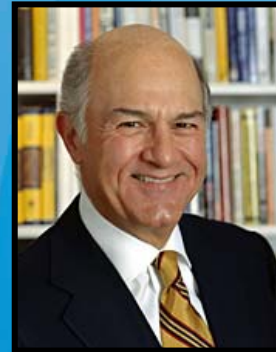
Charles Handy



Meredith Belbin



Jim Kouzes



&

Barry Posner



Ken Blanchard



&

Paul Hersey



Katharine Cook Briggs



&

Isabel Briggs Myers



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# The Theories

**Myers Briggs type indicator**  
(Myers Briggs)

**Belbin Team Roles**  
(Belbin)

**Situational Leadership**  
(Hersey & Blanchard)

**Team Development Stages**  
(Tuckman)





# The 'Missing' Guru's

**John Adair**

**Chris Argyris**

**Warren Bennis**

**James Champy**

**Alfred Chandler**

**Phillip Crosby**

**Edwards Deming**

**Peter Drucker**

**Henri Fayol**

**Gary Hammel**

**Michael Hammer**

**Frederick Herzberg**

**Elton Mayo**

**Joseph Juran**

**Rosabeth Moss Kanter**

**Robert Kaplan**

**John Kotter**

**David Norton**

**Douglas McGregor**

**Abraham Maslow**

**Henry Mintzberg**

**Tom Peters**

**Robert Waterman**

**Michael Porter**

**Reg Revans**

**Edgar Schein**

**Peter Senge**



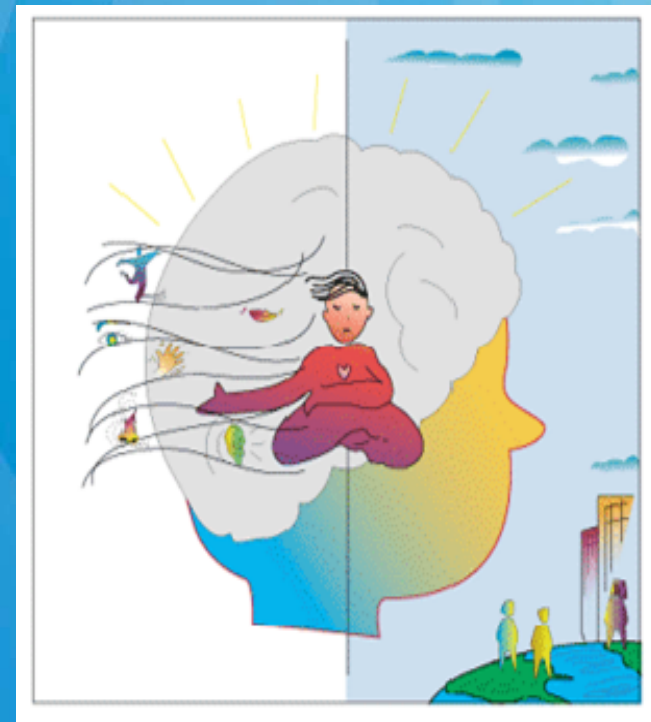
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# Key Findings

✓ The assertion of practitioners that they ‘must be’ drawing upon the more formal, more academic ideas, theories, concepts and models in some kind of subtle, indirect, subconscious, or even subliminal way.



# The Possibilities

1. That appropriation is a genuinely rare and wholly exceptional occurrence.
2. That appropriation is a more frequent, but wholly tacit phenomenon.
3. That appropriation is explicit, but that the knowledge becomes tacit over time.



# An Alpine Story



# Thanks !



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